

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
Headquarters 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile)  
APO San Francisco 96383

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(2)

AVDG-CA-E

25 June 1969

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report - Summary  
APACHE SNOW

Commanding General  
Headquarters 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile)  
APO San Francisco 96383

1. Name and Type of Operation: Operation APACHE SNOW; Reconnaissance in Force.
2. Dates of Operation: 10 May - 7 June 1969.
3. Location: This Operation was conducted in Nam Hoa District, Thua Thien Province. Map References: Sheets; 1:50,000 6441 I, II, III, IV; Series L7014 & L7015.
4. Control Headquarters: Hqs 3d Bde, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile).
5. Reporting Officer: Joseph B. Commy Jr., Colonel Infantry, Commanding.
6. Task Organization:

1-506(-)

2-506(-)

3-187

3-5 Cav

A-2-506 OPCON 18-21 May

D-2-506 OPCON

Bde Control

Bde Scty Plat  
Rcn 1-506  
A-2-17 Cav  
2-319 Arty (DS)  
C-2-11 Arty (GSR)  
C-2-94 Arty (GSR)  
C-1-83 Arty (GSR)

B-326 Engr (DS)  
A-158 AHB (DS)  
B-158 AHB (DS)  
TACP 20 TASS  
58th Sct Dog Plat  
3d FSSE

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AUTHORITY OF DOD DIR. 5200.1 R  
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1st ARVN Regt

1-1 ARVN Bn w/FO Party  
2-1 ARVN Bn w/FO Party  
3-1 ARVN Bn w/FO Party  
4-1 ARVN Bn w/FO Party  
Battery 11 ARVN Arty (DS)  
Battery 34 ARVN Arty (GSR)  
1 LNO Party

3d ARVN Regt

1-3 ARVN Bn w/FO Party  
2-3 ARVN Bn w/FO Party  
3-3 ARVN Bn w/FO Party  
Battery 12 ARVN Arty (DS)

7. Supporting Forces:

a. 2-17 Cav - supported 3d Bde by reconnaissance, the marking of LZs prior to insertions, the screening of ground units and along the Cambodian border, and by pinpointing enemy mortar and rocket locations. (See Incl 5 for further details).

b. Artillery - units shown in task organization provided support for LZ preps, units in contact, H & I fires, and direct fire in defense of bases underground and sapper attack. (See Incl 7 for further details).

c. 7th TAF - provided both preplanned and immediate air strikes with air priority to units in contact, LZ preps, LZ construction, and intelligence targets. (See Incl 8 for further details).

d. 160th Avn Group - provided airlift for combat assaults and extractions, establishment of fire support bases, resupply sorties during the operation, and pathfinder control on both LZ insertions and fire bases. (See Incl 4 for further details).

e. Logistical Support - provided by 3d FSSE, DISCOM, 101st Abn Div, elements of the 426 Supply and Service Battalion, Co C 326 Medical Bn, Co D 801st Maintenance Battalion, Det 1002 Supply and Service Company, 26th Group w/POL Platoon, Laundry and Bath Platoon and Graves Registration Section. (See Incl 4 for detailed breakdown on support units, mission requirements and services rendered).

8. Intelligence: See Inclosure 1 for complete details.

Operation APACHE SNOW confirmed that elements of the 6th, 9th, and 29th Regiments were using the Northern & Shau Valley as a primary LOC for movement of material and infiltration of troops to enemy units throughout I Corps. Using Radio Research Unit techniques and quickly reacting to information gained through POW interrogation, the 3d Brigade was able to exploit hard intelligence and render the 7th, 8th and 9th battalions of the 29th Regt plus its technical units combat ineffective. Also identified were sappers of the K12 battalion and the K6 (AKA 806th) Bn, 6th Regiment, and K35 Arty Bn (Rocket). These units, after unit

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identification and location had been confirmed, were constantly hounded by TAC Air, artillery, and pursuit by 3d Brigade ground forces. This invariably resulted in the capture of a POW whose interrogation resulted in valuable information gained.

#### 9. Mission:

3d Bde and 1st ARVN Regt conduct combined airmobile assaults into the Northern A Shau Valley in conjunction with the 9th Marines and the 3d ARVN Regt to destroy NVA/VC forces, block enemy routes of egress into Laos, interdict enemy LOC, and to locate and destroy enemy caches.

#### 10. Concept of Operation:

a. Prior to D-Day, 10 May 69, the 1st and 3d ARVN Regts and the 2nd Brigade 101 established three mutually supporting fire bases at FB Bradley (YD278122), FB Airborne (YD355070) and FB Currahee (YC399949). On D-Day, following a fifty minute TAC Air prep, an eighteen minute Artillery prep, Air Cav LZ examination, and a one minute ARA LZ prep, five maneuver battalions (three US and two ARVN) were inserted into five separate LZ's along the Laotian border overlooking the Northern A Shau Valley. After searching and clearing the immediate LZ area, all US battalions began extensive RIF operations to the East and Northeast toward the Valley floor. After the insertion of the maneuver battalions had been completed at 1400 hours, the 2-1(-) ARVN Bn combat assaulted atop Tiger Mountain (YD253090) and secured FB Tiger for the insertion of Battery 12 ARVN Artillery (105mm). The 3-5 Cav secured Route 547 and Fire Bases Blaze (YD544203), Bastogne (YD620095), and Cannon (YD475028). Route 547 is the all weather route to be used for resupply of units working in the valley and along its ridge lines.

b. Operations Narrative: On D-Day, 10 May 1969, utilizing lift ships from the 158th and 101st AHB's, the 1-506 Inf at 0730H, 3-187 Inf at 0801H, and 2-501 Inf at 1001H, were combat assaulted into LZ's vicinity YC312949, YC320988, and YD288015 respectively. The 4-1 ARVN Inf battalion at 1020H and 2-1 ARVN Inf Bn(-) at 1300H combat assaulted into LZ's at YD250042 and YD253090. The LZ for the 4-1 ARVN was hot as the lift ships began to receive small arms fire upon exiting the LZ. Sporadic firing continued until approximately 1300H. At Tiger Mountain, one CH 47 was downed on the LZ by small arms fire. There were negative casualties. The 105mm Howitzer being carried was undamaged and the CH 47 was extracted without further incident. The enemy apparently had no advance knowledge of the primary LZ's and as a result, were unable to effect a determined or effective defense.

At 110220H May 69, FB Bastogne received a probe by an unknown size enemy force. Approximately 10 RPG rounds and a substantial amount of small arms fire were directed into the perimeter. At the initial RPG fire,

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ARA and all organic weapons to include 90mm tank guns were employed to counter the attack. One RPG round started a fire which caused an explosion in the ASP of C-1-82 Artillery (175mm). This explosion resulted in 33 US WIA, of which only 18 required medevac. The medevac was complete at 0445 hours 11 May.

On 111000H May 69, the 3-1 ARVN Inf Bn combat assaulted into LZ number 6 at YD197044. The LZ was cold with negative enemy contact. At 1625H, B Co 3-187 Infantry began to receive heavy small arms and machine gun fire from YC325982. This action marked the beginning of the ten day battle for Dong Ap Bia Mountain. Due to the continuous and heavy fighting prior to the capture of Hill 937, a separate Inclosure, Inclosure 9, has been prepared. For all further details on the battle for Dong Ap Bia Mountain refer to Inclosure 9.

12 May 69 resulted in only minor contact with the exception of the 1-506 and 3-187 Infantry Battalions who were enjoined in the battle for Dong Ap Bia. The 2-501 Infantry Battalion and allied units continued to RIF along the border.

At 130335H May 69, FB Airborne recieved a heavy enemy ground attack. Sappers of the K12 Battalion, in conjunction with the C3 Company, K6 Battalion, 6th NVA Regiment attacked the base in a three pronged attack; from the NW, E and S. The CO of A-2-501 employed every weapon at his disposal to include ARA, Spooky and direct fire artillery from B-2-319 (105mm) and C-2-11 (155mm) as the perimeter was assaulted. C-2-319 Artillery sustained both casualties to personnel and one 105 gun was destroyed and one damaged while C-2-11 Artillery sustained one 155mm gun heavily damaged. At 0530H, after the attack had been repulsed, 31 NVA KIA (BC) were found and 1 PW was captured. US losses were 21 KIA and 52 WIA. (See Inclosures 7 and 13 for further details). The 2-501 Inf(-) was extracted from various PZ's (YD284031) at 1030H and completed at FB Airborne at 1220H. The 2-501 Inf then began extensive RIF's in the vicinity of FB Airborne to pursue and destroy the K6 Battalion, 6th NVA Regiment known to be in the area.

During 18 May 69, the battle for Dong Ap Bia raged as heavy ground fighting continued. The 3-187th Infantry fought its way South to the military crest of Hill 937, while the 1-506th Infantry assaulted Northward up the slope. In time, enemy fire from heavily fortified bunkers slowed the momentum of the 1-506th Infantry assault. The 3-187 having pushed further toward the top, began to receive fire from both flanks as the enemy was reinforced. With little daylight remaining, the decision was made to combat assault two additional battalions into the battle to stem the flow of enemy reinforcements and add combat mass to what would be the final assault on Hill 937. At 1830H, A-2-506 Infantry was lifted from Phong Dien to FB Currahee by CH 47 then combat assaulted to vicinity YC320989 at which time they became OPCON to 3-187.

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On 19 May 69, the 2-501 Infantry(-) at 1515H and the 2-3 ARVN at 1327H were combat assaulted from PZ vicinity YD363081 and My Chanh respectively into LZ's at YC332922 and YC338974. Both LZ's were cold and the remainder of the day was spent in preparation for the assault on Dong Ap Bia scheduled for the next day. The 3-5 Cav which had been providing security for engineer worksites along route 547, became OPCON to the 2d Brigade. Having been relieved of providing security for FB's Bastogne, Blaze and Cannon, the elements of the 3rd Brigade were then able to more effectively marshall their resources for the assault on Hill 937.

On 20 May 69, the 3-187th Infantry with A-2-506 OPCON, 2-501 Infantry, 1-506 Infantry and 2-3 ARVN successfully assaulted and drove the 7th and 8th Bns of the 29th NVA Regiment from their mountain stronghold atop Dong Ap Bia Mountain. (See Incl 9 for complete details).

Effective 21 May 69, the 3-187 Infantry became OPCON to the 2d Bde 101st Abn Div, who in turn returned the 2-506 Infantry to 3rd Bde control. The time period 21 May 69 - 7 June was characterized by decreasing enemy contact and ever increasing discoveries of enemy caches. The 2-506 Infantry began their portion of Operation APACHE SNOW by regaining A-2-506 Infantry which had been OPCON to 3-187 Infantry for the final two days of the battle for Dong Ap Bia Mountain. The battalion CP, companies B, C and D(-) moved from Camp Evans, Phong Dien District Headquarters, and the An Lo Bridge to FB Blaze by CH 47. Upon completion of the CH 47 move to FB Blaze, the Battalion CP and E Co(-) combat assaulted to FB Airborne. A-2-506, upon release by the 3-187 Infantry, combat assaulted from PZ (YC327982) to LZ FB Airborne.

On 22 May 69, C & D companies of 2-506 moved from FB Blaze and FB Currahee to FB Airborne. With all elements of 2-506 in and around FB Airborne, the battalion began exhaustive searching and RIF operations to locate NVA Warehouse 54, known to be in the area. (For further information see Inclosure 12).

The 2-501 Infantry began RIF operations from vicinity Dong Ap Bia, along the Dong So Ridge, heading for the Valley floor. The 1-506 Infantry began extensive search and clear RIF operations from Dong Ap Bia Mountain South toward FB Currahee. On 5 June 69, the 4-1 ARVN Battalion moved to PZ vicinity YD278066 and extracted to La Vang. The move was complete at 1315H.

At 072400 June 69, Operation APACHE SNOW was concluded. This combined allied operation saw some of the war's bloodiest and fiercest fought battles against a determined foe. APACHE SNOW has added another stirring chapter to the history of the 3d Bde, 101st Airborne Division. (For detailed information regarding the time period 21 May - 7 June 69 see Inclosure 10, 11 and 12).

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12. Results: a. The 3d Brigade with OPCON units successfully accomplished its mission in Operation APACHE SNOW. This multi-battalion combined Operation was a classic campaign which found the enemy, fixed his location, and methodically and devastatingly destroyed him in place. The effect of this was to destroy the combat effectiveness of not only the maneuver battalions of the 29th NVA Regiment, but also its central headquarters with organic and attached technical units, forcing the remaining broken elements to retreat across the border into Laos, while at the same time preventing them from again using the Northern A Shau Valley as either a staging area for attack or as a large scale storage base to outfit future operations.

b. Enemy Losses categorized as follows:

	<u>US</u>	<u>ARVN</u>
(1) KIA (BC) NVA/VC	691	229
(2) KBAA (BC)	16	
(3) KBA (BC)	102	
(4) Captured: PW -	5	
IWC	241	340
CSWC	40	100
Documents (wt in lbs)		37

c. Friendly Losses: US ARVN

78 KIA 31 KIA

536 WIA 137 WIA

d. Body to Weapons Ratio: US ARVN

691/281 = 2.44:1 229/400 = 1:1.40

e. Enemy to US killed ratio: US ARVN

691/78 = 8.06:1 229/31 = 7.01:1

f. Captured or destroyed Equipment: US

(1) 137,250 rds of SA Ammo	(4) 827 RPG/Rifle Grenades
(2) 2,426 rds CS Ammo	(5) 32 Mine/BBT
(3) 2,386 rds Mortar Ammo	(6) 34,776 lbs Rice

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- |                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| (7) 241 Structures      | (10) 4 Radios            |
| (8) 1205 Fortifications | (11) 125 lbs Explosives  |
| (9) 3 122mm Rockets     | (12) Vehicles (trucks) 4 |

Captured or destroyed Equipment: ARVN

- |                            |                                      |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| (1) 340,000 rds SA Ammo    | (7) 10 122mm Rockets                 |
| (2) 5,000 rds CSW          | (8) 11,735 lbs rice                  |
| (3) 5,000 rds Mortar Ammo  | (9) 257 Fortifications               |
| (4) 540 RPG/Rifle Grenades | (10) 306 Structures                  |
| (5) 566 Hand Grenades      | (11) 14,275 lbs explosives           |
| (6) 227 Mine/BBT           | (12) 40 Vehicles (trucks and dozers) |

13. Administration: (See Inclosure 2).

14. Logistics: (See Inclosure 1).

15. Chemical: Non-Toxic chemical munitions for the M-79 and 105mm Howitzer were employed on several different occasions on 15, 16, and 17 May during the attack on Dong Ap Bia Mountain. CS grenades, both individually thrown by the foot soldier and bulk air dropped from UH-1H aircraft were also used prior to and during assaults (See Inclosures 8 & 9). Although the use of these chemical munitions met with some early success, the changing wind patterns along the ridge lines of Dong Ap Bia Mountain quickly dissipated the agent. The NVA, realizing the effect of CS in a confined area such as a static bunker defense, counteracted the use of CS by donning new Chicom protective masks. Because of these factors, the further use of chemical munitions was suspended after 20 May 69.

16. Civil Affairs (Omitted).

17. Psychological Operations (See Inclosure 5).

18. Communications (See Inclosure 6).

19. Engineer (Omitted).

20. Artillery (See Inclosure 7).

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## 21. Special Equipment and Techniques:

a. Rigger and Rappeling: Discussion - Several times during Operation APACHE SNOW, aircraft were down in hostile terrain where easy access was impossible. At times the only feasible way riggers could get to the aircraft in order to rig it for extraction was through the use of rappeling techniques from UH-1H helicopters.

Solution - Realizing that this method of entry is not a normal technique for riggers, or infantry security elements, experience shows that as a minimum, a basic course of instruction to include actual helicopter rappeling is needed in all infantry and rigger units.

b. Chest Plate Protectors: Discussion - Units of both the 1-506 and 2-506 Infantry Battalions employed aircraft crew member ceramic vest plates for their point men. This body armor, while heavy and cumbersome, saved the lives of three men who were struck by SA at close range.

Solution - The possibility of adapting this aircraft type body armor to use by field troops should be investigated by every infantry unit engaged in operations where contact is felt to be imminent.

## 22. Commander's Analysis:

a. Recon by Fire - Discussion - At least one Company of each maneuver battalion involved in Operation APACHE SNOW initiated premature enemy return fire placing the enemy in a poor defensive posture through the use of recon by fire. As an example, a unit reconning by fire along its route of advance and using 2-17 Cav Pink teams (1 LOH and 1 Gunship) to screen its advance reduces the possibility of being engaged by NVA trail watchers, or "set-piece" ambushes. "Walking fires" or the use of Artillery to recon a route of march makes for rapid employment of both blocking fires and close in contact fires with less time lost through haphazard adjustments and confirmation of map location.

b. Flak vests: Discussion - The protective or "flak" vest, normally worn only by troops in either a static security role or convoy duty, significantly reduced both the number of KIA & WIA for the US battalions assaulting Dong ap Bia Mountain. Many early casualties were due to Claymore and RPG shrapnel. As this type projectile does not have the velocity, nor the penetrating power of small arms fire except at very close range, the flak vest is an excellent defensive measure. The only drawbacks are its weight which causes heat casualties, and its bulkiness.

Solution - Issue "flak" vest as the situation dictates.



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c. Use of Rucksacks: Discussion - whenever possible, it is advantageous for the members of a unit to go "light" i.e. without rucksacks, carrying only water, smoke and a complete basic load for organic weapons.

Solution - This can be done if operating out of a static base, or if resupply is to be effected daily as the rucksack could be lifted by helicopter. The main advantages to going "light" are: ability to move quickly and quietly, rapid deployment in contact, and less fatigue both physical and mental for the lead elements thereby sharpening their prowess and detection skills. The major disadvantage to going "light" is the possibility of failure to resupply because of poor weather or enemy conditions.

d. ARA: Discussion - Throughout Operation APACHE SNOW incidents involving ARA resulted in unnecessary US casualties. The normal manner of employment of ARA is through artillery command channels to the FO accompanying the ground unit commander. It is now apparent that instances occur when the FO is either separated from his commander, or not fully briefed on the entire fluid situation.

Solution - To preclude accidental injury to troops, it is felt that ARA should follow the same procedure as gunships, i.e. contact the ground commander on his internal command net, be briefed on the friendly and enemy situation, and then have his approach pattern checked by the ground commander to insure it is correct and that he has identified all friendlies before rolling in on his rocket run.

e. Use of the Air Cavalry: Discussion - Ground commanders, unless having prior experience, are not normally aware of the limitations and best use of the supporting air cavalry in its role of recon and immediate closing of contact with the enemy.

Solution - A short class to explain and demonstrate the proper use of Air Cav by the ground commander should be held periodically at Brigade level. This class should be attended by all commanders down to and including the company level.

f. Supporting Fires: Discussion - Battalion commanders must be airborne to properly coordinate fire support, i.e. ARA, gunships, TAC Air and heavy artillery. Company Commanders must periodically have demonstrated to them the correct and effective use of these fires in order to remain current and adept in their employment. Heavy (8" & 175mm) artillery with its mass destructive force can be used against entrenched enemy in positions close to friendly elements.

Solution - Airmobile Battalion Commanders should remain airborne

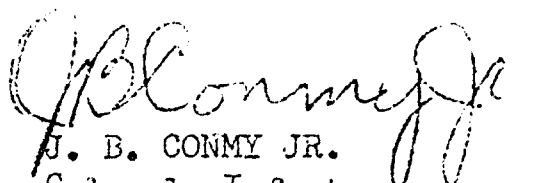
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to command, contact, and coordinate their elements and all supporting fires. Company commanders should periodically attend fire support coordination classes. Heavy artillery should be registered and fired in by ground unit FO's so that should the need arise, it will be readily available.

  
J. B. CONMY JR.  
Colonel, Infantry  
Commanding

15 Incl

1. Intelligence

2. Flight Route,  
Assault Bns

3. Personnel and Administration

4. Logistics

5. Psychological Operations

6. Communications

7. Artillery

8. TAC Air STANDARD

9. Battle for Dong Ap Bia

10. Combat Operations After Action Report, 3-187 Inf

11. Combat Operations After Action Report, 1-506 Inf

12. Combat Operations After Action Report, 2-506 Inf

13. Combat Operations After Action Report, 2-501 Inf

14. Combat Operations After Action Report, 158 AHB

15. Combat Operations After Action Report, 2-17 Cav

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
Headquarters 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division  
APO San Francisco 96383

AVDG-CA-D

25 June 19

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report (APACHE SNOW)

TO: CO  
3rd Bde 101st Abn Div  
ATTN: S-3

The following analysis of the enemy situation and supporting information is submitted for inclosure in the Combat After Actions Report (APACHE SNOW).

*For info & return to*  
CHARLES B. ADDISON  
Captain MI  
S2

1 Incl

I Intelligence of Dong Ap Bia

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BY BAKERS ON 11 MAY 99

Incl 1

SUBJECT: Combat After Actions Report (APACHE SNOW)

(INTELLIGENCE) to Combat After Action Report. (APACHE SNOW)

1. Terrain: The terrain aspects of the 3d Bde Area of Operations generally conformed to the original Intelligence estimate varying from open valley to steep mountains.

a. The Valley: The A SHAU Valley floor consists of flat open terrain which varies in width from 300 meters (YD363032) to three kilometers near TA BAT. Vegetation includes grass, 2 to 6 feet tall and scattered brush. Foot and vehicle trafficability is excellent, and any portion of the valley floor is conducive to helicopter landings.

b. The Transitional Area: Bordering the Northern A SHAU on the western hills at depth of one to two kilometers the terrain is covered with matted grass and brush vegetation which impedes foot traffic. The area is laced with numerous trail networks and trafficability is limited to their use. Tracked vehicles could deploy as far north as YD3112.

c. The Mountainous Area: Rising abruptly out of the narrow fingers and uneven contours of the transitional area, the canopy-covered, steep slopes (20% to 50%) of the mountainous region form an unbroken barrier to movement, observation, and heliborne operations. Foot traffic is confined to trails and streambeds. Observation and fields of fire were severely limited in some areas due to undergrowth and elephant grass. Though no particular area of the operational area was reported as impassable, areas under triple canopy near streams were more difficult due to the amount of tangle foot in the areas where no trails were established. All streams encountered were negotiable by foot troopers. Vehicles though not used in operation Apache Snow would be generally limited to Route 547, valley floor and its long more gradual sloping fingers.

Numerous suitable helicopter landing zones and trails were found in the area. (Overlay will be fwd under separate cover).

2. Weather: Throughout the operational period, the weather was considered excellent. Ground Fog was prevalent in early morning hours in most ravines, usually clearing off around 0800 - 0830 hours. Also immediately following thundershowers cumulus clouds developed and remained in the area for a short time. For the most part, thundershowers occurred between 1430 hours and 2100 hours daily with clear skies developing after rainfall. Temperatures were moderate to warm in afternoon preceding thundershowers. Weather in general was excellent for Airmobile Operations.

3. Enemy Situation: The original intelligence estimate carried order of Battle listings of the following units in the 3d Brigade Area of Operation:

- a. 6th NVA Regiment
  - (1) 806th Bn - Confirmed
  - (2) 800th Bn - Possible
  - (3) 802nd Bn - Possible
- b. 9th NVA Regiment
- c. 559th Trans Group
- d. 675th Arty Regiment
- e. U/I Forces (BA 611)

Though the original estimate of enemy disposition and composition was not confirmed altogether, it is believed that all elements were operating in area of the planned operation except the 9th NVA Regiment. Contacts throughout the period could have and in all probability were made with elements listed in a, c - e. Contact was established on 10 May 1969 by the 3/187 and 1/506 Infantry Battalions and was maintained throughout the duration of the operation. The second day of the operation, the 3d Bn, 187th made sporadic contact with snipers that were dug in as well as tree borne. This contact continued and the fighting increased as the 3/187 had encountered the two Enemy Battalions and sections of an NVA Regimental Headquarters size unit which was later identified through documents and Prisoners as the 29th NVA Regiment. The 7th and 8th Battalions and elements of the 29th Regt Hqs were located on Dong Ap Bia mountain (YC328981). As the intensity of the fighting increased, the 3/187 was joined by three (3) additional battalions in routing the 29th NVA Regiment. The 29th NVA Regiment was the only new unit identified in the area. (See Inclosure # 1 for information on Hill 937). Elements of the 806th Battalion, 6th NVA Regiment and the K10 Sapper Battalion remained active throughout the operation.

4. Enemy Tactics: The 806th Battalion located North of FSB Airborne generally remained in a defensive posture of enemy caches and base areas with limited reconnaissance missions. Elements of the 806th did participate in a sapper attack on 13 May 69. Remaining elements of the 6th NVA were not contacted during the operation. The 29th NVA Regiment was deployed in a defensive role. The 7th and 8th Battalions were deployed in depth utilizing concentric bunkers on Dong Ap Bia (Hill 937). Bunkers were heavily fortified, reinforced ("A" Frame) with thick over head cover and covered with mutual supporting fires. An intricate series of interconnecting trenches enabled the enemy to reinforce any portion of his perimeter. Snipers and 2-3 man listening post were deployed along all possible avenues of approach at sufficient distance from the enemy's perimeter to provide

early warning. With the exception of the battle for Dong Ap Bia from 11-21 May, the mobile defense tactic was employed by the enemy. In this role, US and ARVN units most frequently encountered trailwatchers, small recon parties and snipers during reconnaissance in force operations. The enemy elements employing this tactic would attempt to inflict maximum friendly casualties initially and break contact immediately. Sapper attacks increased during the period indicating the enemy's increased reliance upon this tactic to inflict maximum casualties and destruction of installations and equipment with a minimum of forces which are highly trained with suicidal motivation. Direct and indirect fire attacks on Fire Bases and night defensive positions also increased during the reported period. Fire attacks were usually by enemy snipers deploying harassing techniques with small arms and rocket propelled grenade. Indirect fire attacks were conducted with 60mm mortar, 82mm mortar, 122mm rockets, 122mm artillery (Tiger Mtn) and infrequently by rocket propelled grenades. Only one indirect fire attack was followed by a ground attack and that occurred on 13 May 69 with a combined sapper and ground attack. Mines and booby traps were employed in the area of operation generally along LOC's that the enemy suspected US and ARVN use. Cache sites were heavily booby trapped in a hasty manner appearing to be a last resort of preventing US and ARVN capture of these desperately needed supplies and munitions. Command and trip-device claymores were encountered along LOC's and particularly in defense of Dong Ap Bia. The claymore's were staggered and placed in depth to provide coverage both in front and to sides of bunkers. Grenades, 60 and 80mm mortar rounds with trip devices placed in ordnance containers and left in open areas were also employed.

5. Training: Enemy individual and unit training was considered to be excellent. Particular noteworthy is the excellent marksmanship and concealment employed by elements of the 29th NVA Regiment. Detection of individuals and bunkers were extremely difficult in the initial phases of the operation around Dong Ap Bia and improved as ordnance was placed in heavy jungle terrain. The excellent marksmanship of the 29th Regt showed a marked improvement over previous contacts with enemy units. The special training of the Sapper elements remains in a very high state.

6. Logistics: The overall supply posture of enemy forces was not considered good, however the only known shortages were food. Caches of munitions and other supplies indicate the enemy's ability to infiltrate and store large quantities of supplies in Base areas. Though numerous medical supplies were captured in the area it is believed that the enemy is experiencing a critical shortage of medical personnel in administering treatment.

7. Combat effectiveness and Morale: The overall combat effectiveness of enemy elements contacted was considered to be good and considerably better than the enemy elements previously contacted in lowlands and along the rocket belts. The 7th and 8th Battalions, 29th NVA Regt was considered to be highly effective until after the battle for Dong Ap Bia.

Morale of the enemy continues to be poor. The poor state of morale is

contributed to lack of sufficient food stuffs, continued hardships and repeated defeats by Allies.

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8. Intelligence Operations:

a. Aerial Surveillance

1. Visual Reconnaissance

a. FAC VR - In early February 1969, 3d Brigade FACs began an intense systematic VR program of the northern A Shau Valley. Pilots were debriefed by S2 personnel after completed missions, and furnished valuable data on roads, trails, HLZs and enemy locations.

b. S2 VR - the assistant S2 and S2 Air conducted reconnaissance of the TAOR in fixed-wing aircraft from the 220th RAC and accompanied FACs on missions. Hand held photos were taken of HLZ's and enemy locations.

c. A-2-17 Cav VR - armed helicopter reconnaissance missions were flown by the 2-17 Cav in support of 3d Brigade Operations.

2. Airborne Personnel Detector - sniffer missions were frequently conducted to locate enemy concentrations and were a valuable source of intelligence.

b. Aerial Photography G2 Air-assets of the Division Imagery Interpretation section were utilized in planning operations. Although no specific photo missions were flown, prior photo coverage was used.

c. SLAR and Red Haze - missions were flown daily by XXIV Corps. Radar - FPS 4, 5 and the TRS 25 were employed on forward support bases for ground surveillance and early warning.

d. URS - special agent reports indicated known enemy locations and disposition.

e. PW Interrogation and Document Readout - a team from the 3d Brigade IPW section was maintained at the forward TACP for rapid exploitation of prisoners and captured enemy documents.

9. Totals for Operation Apache Snow: (10 May - 2000H to 7 June 69)

	<u>US</u>	<u>ARVN</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>
KIA	691	229	920
PW	5	0	5
WENS: IWC	241	340	581
CSWC	40	100	140
SA AMMO	97250	340000	437250
CS AMMO: MORT	2462	5000	7462
RPG	827	540	1367
OTHERS	15202	10800	26002
GRAIN (RICE IN LBS)	34778	11735	46511
DEM0 (LBS)	185	14275	14460
DOCUMENTS (LBS)	10 $\frac{1}{4}$	37	47 $\frac{1}{4}$
VEHICLES	4	40	44
BUNKERS	1205	257	1462
STRUCTURES	241	306	547

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Inclosure 1, of Combat After Action Report, (INTELLIGENCE) to APACHE SNOW.

SUBJECT: Intelligence Exploitation of "DONG AP BIA"

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INTRODUCTION: Intelligence played a major part in the success of the 3d Brigade in Operation "APACHE SNOW" and more specifically, intelligence was the major factor that caused a battle for the 937 hill. In the battle of Dong Ap Bia just about every available source of intelligence gathering was exploited.

The means of gathering this information were: Prisoners, spaw reports, visual reconnaissance and Agent Reports.

BACKGROUND: In mid February, during Operation Ohio Rapids conducted in southern and eastern portion of Base Area 101, the 3d Battalion, 187th Infantry captured a prisoner from the 806th Battalion, 6th Regt. During the interrogation of the PW, he stated that his elements received supplies from a warehouse complex in vicinity of the northern A Shau Valley. The prisoner indicated that his elements would move for two (2) days to the west and three (3) days to the south where warehouse 54 was located. Based on this data, exploitation of this area began within the Brigade's capability.

EXPLOITATION: Immediately, Air Strikes were planned and flown in the area of Warehouse 54. These airstrikes received numerous secondary explosions and many secondary fires. Suspecting that the warehouse complex had been located, additional air strikes were placed in the area and the area north of warehouse 54. One airstrike further north was particularly revealing and that was the discovery of a large trail, well used with what appeared to be spider holes along it running in a North-South direction. About this time, an extensive Visual Reconnaissance program was initiated. These VR missions were coordinated and established with Air Force FAC's attached to the 3d Bde for direct air support. The program was set-up to have the FAC's make VR's of the entire area while Airstrikes were being flown in the area and when no fighters were available the FAC's would simply recon the area. After each flight into the area, the FAC would report to S2 and draw all trails, possible landing zones and just generally brief the S2 on his observations in the area. The area of warehouse 54 and the trails leading out of Laos into the Dong Ap Bia were particularly interesting because of the obvious heavy use. After a short period, the FAC's had established a number of trail networks and possible areas of enemy concentrations. Results of the visual Reconnaissance missions were three fold; First, they were able to provide the S2 with immediate information on specific areas of interest, 2) he added to or improved the data base of information on the area for future Operations and third, he became very familiar with the terrain so when friendly troops were deployed in the area, no difficulty was experienced in providing very close air support.

In late February and early March of 1969, indications from URS showed an unusual increase in Spar readings in the upper part of the Valley. Concurrently with the beginning of Operation Massachusetts Striker, a URS

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indicated deployment of a Major North Vietnamese Command in the A Shau area and in Base Area 611 in Laos. Three of these commands were identified as Regimental size headquarters, each regiment having under its command three or more battalions. Discovery of parts of a Coaxial cable tended to buttress the idea of a major commo facility located somewhere in the valley. By early May, a URS report had identified a regimental headquarters as being 5-8 kilometers west of Dong Ap Bia and was moving easterly.

Photographs and captured documents played a major role in selecting the landing zones and general axis of advance of the Battalions participating in the Combat Assaulting of multiple battalions along the Laotian border. The Bde II and Ass't S2 officer under the guidance of the S2 and S3 selected specific areas for photographs. The study and analysis of these photographs were instrumental, both to the S2/3 and later to the Bn Commanders in their planning of assigned missions.

Although agent reports were plentiful in the early stages of formulating a data base and preparing plans for Apache Snow, the information was general and not in depth. The Bde S2 made a liaison visit to the 525th MI Det in Hue and directed specific questions concerning the area of interest to the Det OIC. He was able to respond immediately with some of the information and levied the remaining requirements on his agents.

As the data base grew or developed, plans were made by the 3d Bde to begin Operation Apache Snow to fully exploit the situation. The Operation kicked off on 10 May with a multiple battalion CA into selected LZ's along the Laotian Border. All assaulting elements reported cold LZ's and moved out on multiple axis of advance. On the 2d day of Apache Snow the 3d Battalion, 137th met heavy enemy resistance from a well trained, well concealed and dug in enemy force. The fight continued for the next eight (8) days with some of the hardest and costliest fighting ever experienced by an NVA force. As the Hill was finally taken by a four allied battalion force on 21 May 69, a PW captured revealed that the 29th Regt Hqs with two of its three organic battalions was located on Dong Ap Bia. Further interrogation revealed that elements of the 29th Regt on Dong Ap Bia suffered extreme heavy casualties. One PW estimated that over 80 percent of his Company was destroyed.

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1. Units Strengths:

a. Initial:

	Officers	Warrant Officers	EM
HHC 3d Bde	38	14	239
1st Bn, 506th Inf	37	2	797
2d Bn, 506th Inf	44	2	786
3d Bn, 187th Inf	43	1	755

b. Final:

	Officers	Warrant Officers	EM
HHC 3d Bde	36	14	234
1st Bn, 506th Inf	31	1	661
2d Bn, 506th Inf	40	2	778
3d Bn, 187th Inf	28	1	629

c. Casualties:

	Officers	Warrant Officers	EM
HHC 3d Bde	1	1	4
1st Bn, 506th Inf	13	0	157
2d Bn, 506th Inf	8	0	92
3d Bn, 187th Inf	22	0	318

d. Replacements:

	Officers	Warrant Officers	EM
HHC 3d Bde	2	0	5
1st Bn, 506th Inf	3	0	164
2d Bn, 506th Inf	1	0	81
3d Bn, 187th Inf	9	1	118

e. There was an average of fifty people on leave and R&R during Operation Apache Snow.

2. Other Aspects:

a. AG Functions: An additional administration load was incurred due to the numerous casualties and the correspondence required on each one. Other administration remained at a normal level.

b. PMO: The Provost Marshal reports had no increase in crime during this period.

c. Finance: There was no change in finance functions at the 3d Bde during this period.

d. Chaplain: The brigade chaplains, as a matter of course, visited all units on a regular schedule, no matter where they were located, in order to hold religious services. The chaplains also briefed replacements and visited personnel of the 3d Bde in hospitals in the area. During this time the chaplains also started a building project for a Catholic Orphanage in the local district.

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Extract, After Action Reports, Operation Apache Snow - Logistical, Ho, 3d Bde

1. Reference: a. ADMINO 1-69, Hq, 3d Bde, 101st Abn Div (AM), dtd 28 Feb 69.

b. OFORD 3-69, Hq, 3d Bde, 101st Abn Div (AM), dtd 6 May 69.

2. Operation Apache Snow was initiated by a Brigade planning conference: ADMINO 1-69, dtd 28 Feb 69, initiated the logistical support for the operation.

3. Logistical Task Organization (as of 6 May 1969):

3d FSSE, DISCOM

Elements, 426th Supply and Service Battalion

Co C, 326th Medical Battalion

Co D, 801st Maintenance Battalion

Detachment, 1002d Supply and Service Company

POL Platoon

Laundry and Bath Platoon

Graves Registration

Detachment 2, 571st Ordnance Company (Ammo)

178th Maintenance Company

287th Explosive Ordnance Detachment

15th Aerial Port (USAF)

4. General: Logistical support for this operation consisted of support rendered to the 3d Brigade Task Force, to the 1st ARVN Regiment, and to the 3d ARVN Regiment.

5. Preparation: a. In anticipation of expenditures, a buildup of Class IV and barrier material was effected at Camp Evans. The stockage level of all other classes of supplies at Camp Evans on 6 May 1969 was sufficient for extended field operations by this Brigade.

b. Levels (Camp Evans)

(1). Ammunition: a seven day level is maintained in the Camp Evans ASP by the Da Nang Support Command.

(2). POL: 70,000 gallons of JP4

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Class 4

(3). Rations: a five day level of C-Rations and LRPs.

c. Facilities: All logistical facilities required to support Brigade-sized operations were in place on 6 May 1969.

6. Tactical Conduct: a. Operation Apache Snow commenced on 7 May 1969, (D-3). The 1st ARVN Regiment, the 11th, 12th, and 34th ARVN Artillery Battalions and the 3d Brigade (1/506, 3/187, 2/501, 3/5, 2/319) moved into positions and conducted CA's from D-3 to D+1.

The 3d Brigade forward command post was located at FB Bertchesgarden. The 1st ARVN Regiment forward command post was located at FB Bradley. The 1/506 FSB was located at FB Currahee, the 3/187 FSB was located at FB Bertchesgarden, and the 2/501 and 2/506 FSB was at FB Airborne. The forward command post of the 3/5 was at FB Blaze, and the forward command post of the 2/319 was at FB Eagles Nest.

c. The 3/187 was extracted from the operational area on 21 May 1969.

7. Logistical Support: a. The plan for logistical support entailed sling-loaded cargo movement by CH-47 helicopters from Camp Evans to fire bases. Upon arrival, cargo was stored or further broken down to company loads for resupply to units in the field by UH-1H helicopters.

b. Cargo consisting of mail, personnel, and loads which were deemed uneconomical to move by CH-47 were hauled by UH-1H directly from Camp Evans to FSBs or to the unit in the field.

c. USAF Support: No additional munitions or supplies were flown into Camp Evans Army Airfield in direct support of the operation.

d. Ground Line of Communications: 26th GS Group continued support at a normal rate via ground transportation.

e. Helicopter Support:

(1). UH-1H: Assets of the 158th AHB and the 3d Brigade Aviation Section flew in direct support of committed combat elements.

(2). CH-47: Assets of the 159th ABHB flew 1188 sorties in support of committed combat elements as follows:

<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>CL I</u>	<u>CL III</u>	<u>CL IV</u>	<u>CL V</u>	<u>WATER</u>	<u>MISC</u>
FB Airborne	16	16	29	168	52	6
FB Currahee	17	45	18	230	78	16
FB Bertchesgarden	8	14	14	172	81	6
FB Eagles Nest	4	6	19	7	24	2
FB Bradley				4		
FB Rakksan	2	5	2	67	41	13
Tiger Mt				6		
TOTAL	47	86	82	654	276	43

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f. Medical Support: Seventyseven dust-off missions were flown in support of the operation.

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g. Maintenance: Maintenance work orders in direct support of the operation were processed by Co D, 801st Maint Bn and the 178th Maint Co.

h. Graves Registration: The remains of 63 US personnel and 8 ARVN personnel were processed.

i. Laundry and Bath: Unit standowns were provided to 19 company-sized units immediately prior to and following Operation Apache Snow. Service consisted of hot showers, DX of clothing and boots (as needed), ice cream issue, and super contact teams.

j. GLOC Maintenance: NMCB 10 was responsible for OL 1 maintenance. No significant problems were encountered during the conduct of the operation.

8. Problem Areas: a. Ammunition: Serious problems were encountered with ASR items, in particular 81 mm HE, M-79 HE, and M-26 Fragmentation Grenades. The requirement for H&I fires and close in support of maneuver elements in close proximity to the Fire Support Bases far exceeded the ASR for the period covered. The ASR based upon experience factors of operations on the coastal plains is not representative of the requirements for operations in the A Shau valley and surrounding mountains.

Recommendation: Consideration should be given to operational missions when ASRs are determined and increased usage should be forecasted when terrain and security requirements change.

b. Personnel Movements: The turbulence of replacement personnel and normal administrative personnel requiring transportation forward created a potential problem, if sorted by UH-1. Logistics resupply time was not sufficient to resupply units in the field and move personnel simultaneously. Maximum utilization of CH-47's helped solve this problem. Personnel were loaded internally in CH-47's along with the external loads to achieve maximum utilization.

Recommendation: One central location should be established where personnel from all organizations of the Brigade would be shuttled to forward areas on CH-47's. This would better utilize resources by centralizing the requirement, increasing CH-47 payloads, and decreasing blade time of UH-1's.

c. Chain Saws: Significant problems were encountered by the high deadline rate of chain saws when operated by untrained personnel. Parts for deadlined saws were in short supply. The maintenance requirement to keep chain saws operational is directly correlated to the usage factor. A temporary solution was found by establishing a maintenance float of saws and conducting field location training on proper techniques of operating the chain saw.

Recommendation: All combat units be given practical demonstrations and instruction in the operation and maintenance of chain saws.

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d. Shortage of Air Items: Backhaul of air items from fire bases was a serious problem. When opening a fire base, supplies flow so rapidly that units tend to drag their feet derigging sorties delivered. At times urgently needed supplies are unnecessarily delayed or not delivered due to air items not being available for rigging.

Recommendation: Commanders at all levels should stress the importance of returning air items from fire bases at the earliest possible moment.

e. Water: Forward elements constantly in contact and unable to clear LZ's were operating in areas where water was not available. In order to supply water to these elements, a container which could be kicked out of a helicopter without breaking and one which held an adequate amount of water had to be found. The immediate solution was to use the 175mm powder cannister. However, several draw backs were found which made this solution less than satisfactory. Water transported in these containers had a particularly unpleasant taste; many personnel developed dysentary which was thought to be caused by some chemical residue in the cannisters and the cannisters had to be left in the operational area where they can be salvaged by the enemy.

Recommendation: \* A light disposable water container, which can be kicked out of helicopters without breaking should be found. Commanders at all levels should submit recommendations for a possible solution.

*Gene H. Tosh*

GENE H. TOSH  
Major, Infantry  
S-4

\* Passed to J3-052 (Col Brannon + LTC Friend) on 21 Oct 69. Copy furnished to them.

*EMS*

Eugene M. Simonson  
Lt Colonel, GS

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## Psychological Operations

1. General: During Operation APACHE SNOW, Psychological Operations was confined to Aerial Broadcasts from UH-1H helicopters, and mass leaflet drops in support of the 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile).
  2. Programs: Aerial Broadcasts used the main NVA Chieu Hoi theme interjected with the aspect of unnecessary death in false cause. Mass leaflet drops consisted of an assortment of NVA Chieu Hoi themes: appealing to sense of survival; referring to stamina of American Troops in pursuit of their goals, and the fairness of GVN forces dealing with NVA Chieu Hoi's.
  3. Results: The NVA troops were attacked with Aerial Broadcast and mass leaflet drops. Since vast areas had to be covered in short intervals of time the propaganda medias were considered best suited to effectiveness of such an operation. The material was spread over the areas of heaviest concentration and reached targets with adequate accuracy.
- A total of 5,310,000 NVA Chieu Hoi leaflets were disseminated in the 28 days of the operation. A total of 47 hours of Aerial Broadcasts were also included in support of the operation..

### CONCLUSION:

Although no Chieu Hoi's and only a slight number of POW's were taken in the operation, the effectiveness of Psychological Operations should not be considered a total loss. All POW's stated that all broadcasts were heard and leaflets were received. However, discipline in the individual unit plus the fear of Political Officer's pressure in the unit and in home base disrupted the minimal chances of total success

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Inclosure 6 - to Combat After Action Report - Operation Apache Snow

SUBJECT: COMMUNICATIONS EMPLOYMENT DURING OPERATION "APACHE SNOW".

1. The following FM and Ratt radio nets were employed from Brigade to Division and Subordinate units in support of operation "Apache Snow" and were effective during the entire operation.

NETS	MODE	TYPE EQUIPMENT
Division Command Net	FM Secure	AN/VRC - 46/KY-8
Division Command Net	FM Nonsecure	AN/VRC - 46
Division Intell Net	FM Secure	AN/PRC - 77/KY-38
Division Spt Net 1	Ratt Secure	AN/VSC - 2/K W-7
Brigade Command Net	FM Nonsecure	AN/VRC - 46 (see note)
Brigade Command Ops/Intell	FM Secure	AN/VRC - 46/KY-8
Brigade Admin/Log	FM Nonsecure	AN/VRC - 46/AN/PRC

2. VHF communications were employed extensively throughout the entire operation, and was effective. VHF was employed from the following locations

FROM	TO	MODE	TYPE EQUIPMENT
Berchtesgaden	Camp Evans	VHF	AN/GRC - 163
"	FB Currahee	VHF	AN/GRC - 163
"	FB Eagle Nest	VHF	AN/GRC - 163
"	FB Blaze	VHF	AN/GRC - 163/AN/MRC-6
"	Camp Evans	VHF	AN/MRC - 69 (See note)
"	Camp Eagle	VHF	AN/MRC - 69
Camp Evans	FB Rakkasan	VHF	AN/MRC - 68

3. All other means of communications were employed IAW with the Brigade SOP experiencing no major difficulty.

NOTES

1. Radio Set AN/VRC - 49 (Automatic Retrans) was located at FB Eagles Nest to communicate with units operating from the valley floor of the A Shau Vall

2. Six (6) channels were strapped over at Camp Eagle to Camp Evans.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, 2D BATTALION, 319TH ARTILLERY  
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96383

18 June 1969

SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report, Operation Apache Snow

Commanding Officer  
3d Brigade, 101st Airmobile Division  
ATTN: S-3  
APO 96383

REGRADED UNCLASSIFIED BY  
AUTHORITY OF DOD DIR. 5200.1 R  
BY 1SAKERS ON 11 May 99

1. Mission: Direct support of the 3d Brigade and control of artillery fires in the 3d Brigade Area of Operations.

2. Concept of Operations:

a. Organization of the artillery was as follows:

- (1) 2/319th Arty DS 3d Bde
- (2) B2/11 Arty GSR 101st Abn Div
- (3) C2/11 Arty GSR 101st Abn Div
- (4) A1/83 Arty GSR 101st Abn Div
- (5) C1/83 Arty GSR 101st Abn Div
- (6) 4/77th ARA GSR 2/319th Arty

b. Concept of the operation was to provide artillery coverage with all batteries for all friendly elements as needed.

3. Execution:

a. This Battalion was in DS of the 3d Brigade in the area of operation, the A Shau Valley, during the entire operation, Apache Snow. "B" Battery was the first battery to support Apache Snow when they moved from Camp Evans to Bertchesgarden on 25 April 1969. On 9 May 1969 "A" Battery moved from FSB Blaze to FSB Currahee, and on 8 May 1969 "C" Battery moved from FSB Rakkassan to FSB Airborne, all moved in support of operation Apache Snow. Part of the Battalion TOC moved to FSB Blaze on 25 April 1969, and the complete TOC moved to Eagle's Nest on 10 May 1969. On 13 May 1969 "C" Battery 2/319th Artillery came under mortar and ground attack from the South and Southwest grid 357052 and from the hill to the East. Personnel losses were as follows: 49 WIA's and 13 KIA's and 1 died of wounds later, bring total of KIA's to 14. Equipment losses were as follows: 1 105mm Howitzer destroyed and 1 damaged. Both were replaced the same day. Other equipment losses include:

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D/4 Hq 2/319 FA 101st Abn Div

18 June 1969

SUB LTR: Combat Opns After Action Report, Apache Snow

(1) Radio Set, Control AN/GRA-39	3 ea
(2) Radio Set, AN/PRC-47	1 ea
(3) Radio Set, AN/PRC-25	3 ea
(4) Container, Insulated, Thermal	1 ea
(5) Antenna, RC-292	6 ea
(6) Launcher, Grenade	1 ea
(7) Light Set, General Illumination	1 ea
(8) Computer, M18	1 ea
(9) Rifle, M16A1	1 ea
(10) Trailer, $\frac{1}{4}$ Ton	1 ea
(11) Generator Set 1-5 kw	1 ea
(12) Headset, 144 C/V	7 ea

Operation Apache Snow ended 2400 hours 8 June 1969. At that time the below listed units in support of Apache Snow were disposed as follows:

- (1) Hq TOC at Eagle's Nest
- (2) A2/319 Arty at FSB Currahee
- (3) B2/319 Arty at FSB Bertchesgarden
- (4) C2/319 Arty at FSB Airborne
- (5) B2/11 Arty at FSB Currahee
- (6) C2/94 Arty at FSB Nancy
- (7) A6/33 Arty at FSB Thor
- (8) C1/83 Arty at FSB Blaze
- (9) A4/77 ARA at Camp Evans

b. Number, type of missions and ammunition expenditures for organic batteries follow:

<u>TYPE OF MISSION</u>	<u>NO OF MISSIONS</u>	CS	HE	WP	ILL	HH	FC	SMK
Confirmed	528	172	1506	250	0	0	0	0
Acquired	1829	0	15974	0	0	0	380	0
Counterbattery	62	0	1116	0	0	0	0	0
Preparation	112	0	1008	603	0	0	0	0
Interdiction	2116	0	10580	0	0	0	0	0
Special Purpose	643	0	3858	542	627	0	0	216
ARVN, CIDG	11	0	3408	0	42	0	0	0
Registration	79	0	948	0	0	0	0	0
Other	202	0	1818	0	0	30	0	0

4. Analysis: The operation was a success from the artillery point of view. The effect of H&I fires as a deterrent cannot be determined since results are normally unobtainable. Enemy rocket and ground attacks, such as the "C"

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D/A Hq 2/319 FA 101st Abn Div

18 June 1969

SUB LTR: Combat Opns After Action Report, Apache Snow

Battery incident, have made it necessary for the artillery to respond quickly. This type of response has proven to be very effective against such attacks on Fire Support Bases in the Brigade AO.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

*John M Lincoln*

JOHN M LINCOLN

CPT, FA

Adjutant

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Tactical Air Support (Operation Apache Snow)

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1. Mission:

The mission of the 3d Bde, 101 Abn USAF Tactical Air Control Party to Operation Apache Snow can be divided into 5 phases:

- a. Pre-operation reconnaissance, mapping, and intelligence gathering.
- b. Advising the Brigade concerning the best use of Tactical Airpower (TAC Air).
- c. Planning and coordinating the Tactical Airpower employment for D-Day.
- d. Controlling airstrikes in support of the ground elements.
- e. Visual reconnaissance during the operation.

2. Concept of Operation: TAC Air would be used prior to D-Day to VR known enemy routes, cut trails and roads in the A Shau Valley floor, and prepare LZ's for future use. After D-Day, constant FAC coverage would provide immediate coverage for units in contact with the ability to rapidly direct already airborne TAC Air for additional destructive power on heavily defended enemy emplacements.

a. The pre-operation reconnaissance program was initiated approximately one month prior to D-Day. It consisted primarily of working with the Brigade S-2 in mapping enemy trails and probable enemy locations. Another important part of this phase consisted of taking the Brigade and Battalion Commanders and key staff members on flights over the area of operation, thus allowing them to become familiar with their areas before D-Day.

b. The advice of the ALO and FAC's was sought concerning the most probable areas of enemy concentration, the best locations for LZ's and the best way of using TAC Air in preparing LZ's, covering the insertions, and supporting troops in contact.

3. Execution:

STATISTICAL SUMMARY

Date	FAC Sorties	Airstrikes	Bombs(lbs)	Napalm(lbs)
10 May	8	27	118,500	29,500
11	6	14	119,000	21,000
12	4	16	118,500	16,500
13	6	16	85,000	15,000
14	4	15	103,000	16,000
15	5	13	99,500	14,000

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## Tactical Air Support (Operation Apache Snow)

Date	FAC Sorties	Airstrikes	Bombs(lbs)	Napalm(lbs)
16	3	12	106,000	12,000
17	5	14	115,000	17,500
18	5	12	48,000	28,000
19	4	17	123,000	17,000
20	4	16	81,000	24,000
21	4	11	92,000	5,000
22	3	8	43,000	11,000
23	3	15	61,000	17,500
24	4	7	96,000	5,000
25	4	13	75,000	6,000
26	4	9	59,000	4,500
27	0	0	0	0
28	4	0	0	0
29	4	0	0	0
30	3	2	11,000	2,000
31	3	4	36,000	0
1 June	2	3	13,000	6,000
2	4	3	22,000	0
3	4	10	58,000	15,000
4	3	5	40,000	0
5	2	8	72,000	0
6	4	10	76,000	3,000
7	3	7	66,500	0
29 Days	112 Sorties	287 Airstrikes	1,937,000	285,500

NOTE: These figures include only those airstrikes actually controlled by this TACP. They do not include those controlled by the ARVN TACP in support of the ARVN portion of Operation Apache Snow. Nor do they include Arclights or Combat skyspots.

NOTE: 27, 28, and 29 May were bad weather days, requiring all TAC Air to be controlled by Combat skyspot. 27 May through 2 June were also bad weather days, requiring most of the TAC Air to be controlled by combat skyspot.

BOMB DAMAGE ASSESSMENT  
TOTALS FOR APACHE SNOW

Killed by Air	102
Secondary Explosions	81
Secondary Fires	52
Fortifications	332
Destroyed	
Military Structures	47
Destroyed	
Crew-Served weapons	4
positions Destroyed	
Road Cuts	7

## 4. Analysis:

a. The Brigade ALO did considerable planning and coordinating with the Brigade and division staffs, the 101st Division ALO, the ARVN ALO, and the Direct Air Support Center. This involved planning the ordnance load, timing, controlling, entry and exit routes and altitudes, and holding locations and altitudes of 32 airstrikes on D-Day. This planning and coordination resulted in an extremely smooth, orderly, effective, and accident - free TAC Air operation on D-Day.

b. An important part of this TACP's contribution to the success of Operation Apache Snow was the day-to-day controlling of airstrikes in support of the ground commanders. Airstrikes played an especially important part in the Battle of Dong Ap Bia. Seldom in this or any other conflict has TAC Air been employed so massively as in the Battle of Dong Ap Bia.

c. When not busy controlling airstrikes the Forward Air Controllers conducted extensive visual reconnaissance of the area of operation and possible routes of enemy resupply or retreat. Although the area is not conducive to effective visual reconnaissance due to the thick jungle canopy, an enemy road used for resupply was detected and partially interdicted.

## 5. Lessons Learned

a. The absolute necessity of precise, detailed planning and coordination for large operations like the prepping of LZ's and the aircapping of the insertions of D-Day. The simultaneous prepping and aircapping of several LZ's in close proximity to each other, in different AO's, controlled by several FAC's from different TACP's and using different frequencies, along with the intense artillery fire and multitude of helicopters in the area all combined to present an excellent opportunity for mid-air collisions, short rounds, or some other disaster. Only by very detailed planning and coordination was this potential disaster turned into a smooth, efficient demonstration of air power.

b. The selection and construction of LZ's. All units had good LZ's because the sites selected were on relatively level terrain that was originally covered by scrub brush or elephant grass. These LZ sites were selected after several futile attempts were made at constructing LZ's on karst pinnacles or razor-backed ridges covered with triple canopy jungle. The Daisy Cutter bombs (1000 lbs with fuse extensions) used for LZ construction easily clear out the scrub brush and elephant grass. However, it takes many airstrikes and a great deal of time to construct an LZ on a jungle-covered mountain top; first, because the mountain top is extremely difficult to hit, and second, because more hits are required to clear out the dense jungle. The

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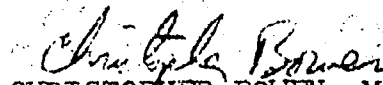
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# Tactical Air Support (Operation Apache Snow)

experiences of this operation seem to indicate that in the future the process of LZ selection, where TAC Air construction is required, should be more of a compromise between the highest ground, which is naturally desirable, and the more level ground, which is more practical to construct.

c. Use of fire power to dislodge the enemy from deeply bunkered, heavily protected positions, such as were encountered on Dong Ap Bia Mountain. Although the usual ordnance for a troops-in-contact airstrike (500 pound bombs and napalm) does destroy some fortified positions and produce many casualties, it is not sufficient to dislodge a determined enemy from really heavily protected bunkers. It would seem that the best way to accomplish the task would be for the friendly troops to draw back to safe positions and thoroughly cover the enemy positions with large (at least 1000 pounders) bombs with delayed (at least .025 second) fuses. The larger the bomb and the more delay, up to 1 second, the better.

  
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